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ABSTRACT

This task force report offers specific recommendations to enhance secondary vocational education as an integral component within the total educational spectrum in the state of Maine. The task force identified six major initiatives and made 30 specific recommendations, which are detailed in this report. The six initiatives cover (1) approaches to educational delivery; (2) access; (3) education for the world of work; (4) career information and planning; (5) structure and finance; and (6) administration. (KC)

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL & CULTURAL SERVICES

Commissioner's Task Force To Study Secondary Vocational Education In Maine

A REPORT TO THE COMMISSIONER:

EDUCATION FOR THE WORLD OF WORK IN THE STATE OF MAINE

INITIATIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL & CULTURAL SERVICES

John R. McKernan, Jr.
Governor

Eve M. Bither
Commissioner

BUREAU OF ADULT AND SECONDARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

William H. Cassidy
Associate Commissioner

COMMISSIONER'S TASK FORCE TO STUDY SECONDARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN MAINE

Michael W. Aube
Chairman

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December 28, 1987

Eve M. Bither, Commissioner
Department of Educational & Cultural Services
State House Station #23
Augusta, Maine 04333

Dear Commissioner Bither:

It is with great pleasure that I forward to you the report of the Task Force to Study Secondary Vocational Education in the State of Maine.

The Task Force members, representing diverse perspectives, worked effectively and with conviction for the past eight months. Issues and concerns were raised by many; educators, teachers, parents/guardians, students, and business and industry officials. Their comments provided an opportunity for a widespread and healthy debate. These discussions, coupled with published material and forums with national leaders of the secondary vocational effort, challenged and advanced the thinking of the Task Force.

As a result, this report offers specific recommendations to enhance secondary vocational education as an integral component within the total educational spectrum.

The linkage of Education and Economic Development has been a cornerstone of Governor McKernan's efforts to make Maine an "opportunity" state. This report complements those efforts to advance education reform and economic opportunity in the State of Maine. The recommendations found in this report are based in a belief that "educational investment" in Maine citizens will result in a prepared work force for the year 2000 as well as increased economic benefits for all of Maine's citizens.

Sincerely,

Michael W. Aube, Chair
Commissioner's Task Force to Study
Secondary Vocational Education
in Maine

MWA/pj

PREFACE

Secondary vocational education is a vital element in the educational process and a viable mechanism for the preparation of life whether it be for the development of occupational or life skills.

The Maine State Board of Education and the Department of Educational and Cultural Services recognize the importance of reviewing this discipline to assure it meets the needs of a rapidly changing society and job market. Such a review must assure students receive the basic educational skills of communication, writing, problem solving, and mathematics, which better prepare individuals to enter the world of work or continued education and training.

In recognition of these facts, Commissioner Eve M. Bither established a task force in May of 1987, with the support of a resolution by the Maine State Board of Education. This group consisted of 30 individuals representing various educational, social, public service agencies, and the business/industrial sector.

The content of this report represents the consensus of the group after a review of the available research in the discipline, public hearings, and informational presentations by nationally recognized experts in the field of secondary vocational education.

Many issues were considered by the task force, some of which require further consideration by the Department of Educational and Cultural Services and others. The report represents those initiatives which the task force believes warrant immediate action for the enhancement of occupational education in Maine's secondary schools.

The content of this report will be incorporated into the Department of Educational and Cultural Services planning for secondary vocational education in Maine, as we prepare the workforce for the year 2000.

William H. Cassidy
Associate Commissioner for Adult & Secondary Vocational Education
Maine Department of Educational & Cultural Services

INTRODUCTION

Education is a dynamic learning process, beginning in early childhood and continuing throughout an individual's lifetime. Secondary vocational education is a vital and integral component within the total educational spectrum. Secondary vocational education is both "a way to learn and a reason to learn."

The value of secondary vocational education must be communicated to students, parents, teachers, administrators, and the general public. New technologies and information requirements in our society will demand not only basic skills, but also the ability to communicate effectively, to solve problems and to respond to rapid change. Secondary vocational education provides the opportunity for individuals to learn analytical and conceptual skills within a practical environment. It is one of several educational opportunities available to all students as they progress through the educational system.

The Secondary Vocational Education Task Force envisions a comprehensive, integrated educational delivery system, which focuses on an individual's learning needs and goals, while incorporating the objective of preparing students for a future of fulfillment as citizens and workers in the State of Maine. In pursuit of this vision, the Task Force has identified six major initiatives and 30 specific recommendations.

These initiatives and recommendations are set forth on the following pages.

EDUCATIONAL DELIVERY

INITIATIVE I

Approaches to educational delivery which stress individualized and self-paced learning, accomodate different learning styles, and foster maximum educational opportunities for every student should be implemented as a major educational practice within elementary and secondary education. Based on available assessments, courses of study should be individualized and competency-based, combining theoretical, practical, and experiential components in the education of all students and allowing each student to acquire the skills and knowledge required to satisfy their interests and career needs.

Recent years have seen a steady rise in the professional demands on all educators. There is a need for teacher training and in-service programs to develop the skills teachers require to meet these changes.

RECOMMENDATION 1.1

Approaches to teacher training should be developed to:

a. improve teacher skills training availability for vocational instructors who may have entered the occupation via the trade route;

b. combat the gender, social class, and occupational stereotyping that has such a profoundly limiting effect on the education of the majority of students; and,

c. increase the ability of teachers to provide an appropriate education for special needs students, attract and serve the needs of women students in nontraditional fields, keep abreast of the rapidly changing technology in their fields, and deal with the need to remediate deficiencies in the basic skill preparation of many of their students.

EDUCATIONAL DELIVERY

Attractive and attainable life options - either continued education, training, or immediate employment - should be waiting for all high school graduates upon completion of their kindergarten-12 educational experience.

RECOMMENDATION 1.2

New measures of educational effectiveness should be developed, which recognize the fulfillment of individual educational and employment goals and emphasize performance standards. All students who successfully complete a given course of study should be assured of access to the corresponding employment option or next level of education.

The majority of vocational education programs offered in Maine fall into the category of occupational preparation: occupational skill training of high school juniors and seniors for immediate employment upon graduation in specific occupations contained in any of the following six fields:

Agriculture/Agribusiness Occupations;
Business and Office Occupations;
Home Economics Related Occupations;
Marketing and Distributive Occupations;
Technical and Emerging Occupations; or
Trade and Industrial Occupations.

Several technical preparation programs are also offered, designed to prepare students for postsecondary study in one of those six fields.

RECOMMENDATION 1.3

Vocational education at the secondary level should include three distinct but closely related categories of instructional programs: occupational preparation, technical preparation, and career exploration.

EDUCATIONAL DELIVERY

States have recently begun to devote more and more attention to "Tech Prep" programs: "2+2," "2+1," "1+2," "1+1," and other formal articulation arrangements between secondary and postsecondary vocational education. Careful coordination on a state-level and regional basis between secondary and postsecondary vocational curricula will improve the quality of education.

RECOMMENDATION 1.4

A mechanism should be developed to assure curriculum coordination:

a. among secondary programs; and,

b. between secondary and postsecondary vocational education.

RECOMMENDATION 1.5

The Department of Educational and Cultural Services should organize a systematic and energetic public relations, marketing, and outreach campaign. The value of vocational education must be made clear to students, their parents/guardians, teachers, administrators, and the general public. Attendance at a region or center should become a positive factor in the morale and self-esteem of students pursuing career planning, occupational, and technical preparation courses of study.

ACCESS

INITIATIVE II

All students, kindergarten-adult, must have access to a total lifelong educational process.

RECOMMENDATION 2.1

Vocational education programs should be available beginning in the 9th grade.

The task force recognizes that there are major disparities across the State both in type of programs offered and in program accessibility to students.

RECOMMENDATION 2.2

Assure equal access to and availability of vocational education programs in all areas of the State.

RECOMMENDATION 2.3

Increase the level of use of vocational facilities, using both existing day school seats and special evening, weekend, and summer programs to provide greater access for adult learners, dropouts, and Welfare, Employment, Education and Training (WEET) and Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) participants to occupational skill training and career counseling.

Experience at the postsecondary level has demonstrated that developmental assistance and individualized student support services have a dramatic effect on the recruitment and retention of handicapped and disadvantaged students.

RECOMMENDATION 2.4

In order for all students to avail themselves of educational programs, certain support services need to be provided--including, but not limited to:

a. ongoing professional assessment;

b. child care;

c. developmental studies; and,

d. transition teams to facilitate the progress of special populations through the educational system and their subsequent coordination with employment and training programs.

RECOMMENDATION 2.5

The Department of Educational and Cultural Services and the State Board of Education should encourage the development of a daily and annual common school calendar for each region and center.

THE WORLD OF WORK

Implicit in this policy is the assumption that a primary objective of public education at all levels must be to prepare students for rewarding and productive employment. The basic idea is simply that the fundamental purpose of education is **preparation for life** and that one integral and essential aspect of preparation for life is **preparation for work.**

The foundation of an Education for a World of Work program for the State of Maine must be an expanded definition of the nature and role of vocational education at the secondary level.

INITIATIVE III

Both education and employment training should be mobilized to prepare Maine citizens for a changing world of work. The State Board of Education and the Department of Educational and Cultural Services should develop and promote a comprehensive and integrated program of *Education for the World of Work.*

RECOMMENDATION 3.1

To realize the full potential of vocational education in the State, several new features should be developed:

a. A new planning and evaluation process should be developed to ensure close and effective linkages between curriculum content and labor market needs - in particular, to carry out a systematic needs assessment to identify which specific occupational preparation programs are most appropriate at the secondary level;

b. Basic reasoning, communication, and computation skill training should be integrated into all courses of study at the secondary level;

c. Standard, competency-based core curricula should be developed at the state level for all vocational education courses of study and programs, and individual competency statements should be provided to all completers;

d. All vocational courses of study should place special emphasis on transferable skills within each program area; and,

e. Occupation-specific education should continue to be available at the secondary level. Within this framework, there must be flexibility, depending on student ability, interests, age, and grade level. This includes special education students who can benefit from specific skill development.

RECOMMENDATION 3.2

Vocational centers and regions need to establish more and stronger collaboration with the private sector and with other public agencies, to capitalize on available resources affecting vocational initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION 3.3

The implementation of an Education for the World of Work program will require a major change of attitude and approach on the part of the educational community:

a. Vocational education must be moved from the sidelines back into the mainstream of secondary education. The secondary education system should be transformed into a flexible, horizontally integrated format appropriate to a changing world economy;

b. The "General" course of study, which leads neither to work nor to college, should be discontinued;

c. The educational system as a whole must rededicate itself to meeting the career and life needs of ALL students; and,

d. Liberal arts, vocational, technology, consumer and homemaking, and business educators must all learn to work together within the framework of an Education for the World of Work program.

RECOMMENDATION 3.4

Basic life/work/career skills--pre-employment competencies--should be integrated into the minimum requirements of all courses of study at the elementary and secondary levels.

Each student shall be required to demonstrate proficiency in the following four *Pre-Employment Competency Areas*:

a. Career decision making (self-awareness, career awareness, labor market information, career choice);

b. Life/work management (managing personal responsibility, problem solving/coping);

c. Job getting (job seeking, resumes and applications, contact skills, interviewing); and,

d. Work maturity (dependability/reliability, communication skills, personal relations, initiative/productivity, worker-rights).

CAREER INFORMATION

Education is a lifelong process, beginning in early childhood and continuing through the retirement years. The accelerating pace of change in the labor market demands more sophisticated and more frequent career decision making.

INITIATIVE IV

The public school system at all levels must realign its resources and increase its level of commitment to meet the growing need for career information, exploration, and planning.

RECOMMENDATION 4.1

A comprehensive, life-centered, kindergarten-adult career information and exploration program should be developed, to empower every student to make informed, rational, and realistic choices from among the whole range of educational and employment options.

The features of such a program should include:

a. A kindergarten through grade 6 career awareness infusion program, particularly designed to combat sex stereotyping and socio-economic tracking during the earliest years of the educational experience.

   Recognizing that career education must permeate the learning process, the task force recommends that the Department of Educational and Cultural Services develop a program to infuse career awareness and information as a component of daily educational activities, in addition to the specific services available through the guidance system.

   Rather than separate classes or other costly supplementary activities, an awareness of the world of work should be integrated into existing curricula.

CAREER INFORMATION

Beyond gradually setting the stage for more intensive career exploration and decision-making activities during the 7th and 8th grades, the basic purpose of a career awareness infusion program would be to broaden the career horizons and raise the aspirations of Maine's youth.

b. A middle school/junior high systematic career information, exploration, planning, and employment literacy program, incorporated into a broader program covering life and career skills, and designed to increase the self-esteem and raise the aspirations of all students for fulfilling productive work and a decent standard of living, and to foster nontraditional thinking and risk taking in the area of career and life choices.

c. Technology education and consumer and homemaking education for all junior high school students and available to all students, 9-12.

   These programs should offer broad exposure to the world of work and new and emerging technologies. For the first time, 8th graders and other students on the eve of high school should be in a position to make informed and relatively mature decisions about their high school course of study.

d. Education Planning Process for all high school students.

   Based upon a thorough career and educational assessment, an Education Planning Process (EPP) should be conducted with every student during the eighth grade, with annual revisions thereafter until graduation. Developed through discussions and negotiation with the student, parents/guardians, counselors, and teachers, the Education Planning Process should include not only the course of study the student intends to pursue in high school but also the anticipated goals of their studies:

   - four-year college enrollment;
   - VTI enrollment;
   - other postsecondary enrollment;
   - apprenticeship;

- other formal on-the-job training;
- other immediate employment; or,
- enlistment in a military service.

The Education Planning Process should be stated in terms that are open ended and flexible, allowing for periodic updates and redirections.

e. A statewide school-to-work transition and dropout recovery program which extends the organizational benefits of traditional vocational education to all students regardless of course of study but is aimed particularly at career preparation students.

f. The adoption of a comprehensive plan for guidance and counseling for students kindergarten through adult by Maine's local educational agencies.

The framework for such a plan was offered by the Department of Educational and Cultural Services through *Informational Letter #59* (June 22, 1987). This framwork was developed through the efforts of a Guidance Task Force convened in December of 1986.

STRUCTURE AND FINANCE

INITIATIVE V

A review of the governance structure, statutes, and financing of secondary vocational education within the State of Maine should be undertaken to assure equitable funding and educational opportunities.

RECOMMENDATION 5.1

The Department of Educational and Cultural Services should carry out a comprehensive review of the physical integrity, adequacy, and accessibility of all vocational facilities and equipment, and develop strategies to finance the necessary improvements.

RECOMMENDATION 5.2

The Department of Educational and Cultural Services should carry out an analysis of each center and region to determine the feasibility of developing a common governance and funding mechanism.

RECOMMENDATION 5.3

The Department of Educational and Cultural Services should convene a special study group to carry out a comprehensive review of State vocational education statutes and propose such clarifications, revisions, and other amendments as may be necessary.

RECOMMENDATION 5.4

As part of its legislative initiative, the Department of Educational and Cultural Services should request an annual state appropriation to provide for the necessary State cash match of Carl D. Perkins Act program improvement funds.

ADMINISTRATIVE INITIATIVES

INITIATIVE VI

The Department of Educational and Cultural Services should pursue new initiatives for secondary vocational education. Since several of the task force recommendations fall within the statutory authority of the department and the Commissioner of Educational and Cultural Services, the task force strongly recommends the folllowing:

RECOMMENDATION 6.1

In recognition of the need for increased responsiveness in our educational system, an accurate and comprehensive database of analytical and management information should be developed to support these initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION 6.2

The Commissioner of Educational and Cultural Services should propose that Section 2 ("Elementary Course of Study") of Chapter 127 ("Maine Instructional Requirements and Graduation Standards") be amended with the addition of the following language to subpart 127.10 ("Required Subjects"):

> Career Awareness - Comprehensive career awareness instruction shall be required of all students in grades K through six, integrated into the elementary curriculum.

RECOMMENDATION 6.3

The Commissioner should conduct a feasibility study of further amending Subpart 127.10 of Chapter 127 with the following paragraphs:

Consumer and Homemaking Education - A total of at least one school year of consumer and homemaking education shall be required of all students in grades 7 and 8.

Technology Education - A total of at least one school year of technology education shall be required of all students in grades 7 and 8.

RECOMMENDATION 6.4

The Commissioner should propose that Section 1 ("General Provisions") of Chapter 127 be amended with the insertion of the following language as paragraph E of Section 127.03 ("General Requirements K- 12"):

E. Education Planning Process

Each school administrative unit shall establish procedures for the development of an educational planning process for each student during the eighth grade.

This process shall enable the student to define the course of study to be pursued by the student in grades 9-12, and shall specify the opportunities for further education or immediate employment that should be available to the student upon successful execution.

The procedures shall provide for the involvement of the students, their parents/guardians, their teachers, and their counselors, in the preparation of the Education Planning Process. In addition, opportunities shall be provided for the review and revision of the process each year until graduation.

ADMINISTRATIVE INITIATIVES

RECOMMENDATION 6.5

The Commissioner should continue to collaborate, through existing mechanisms whenever possible, with the Commissioners of Human Services, Labor, Corrections, and Mental Health and Retardation, in order to review, evaluate, and make recommendations concerning vocational education programming for special needs students - including, but not limited to, handicapped, disadvantaged, adult training and retraining, single parent/homemaker, sex equity, incarcerated, and Native American.

RECOMMENDATION 6.6

The Commissioner should forward an Informational Letter, with input from the field, to vocational directors, superintendents, principals, teachers, guidance personnel, parents/guardians, and students, setting forth standard guidelines for meeting graduation requirements through integrated studies.

RECOMMENDATION 6.7

The Department of Educational and Cultural Services should encourage the use of teacher in-service days to provide a forum for the dissemination of techniques and materials for integrating career information into the curriculum, kindergarten-12. This should be a continuing developmental process provided each year.

RECOMMENDATION 6.8

The Department of Educational and Cultural Services should provide incentives for teachers which would stimulate the introduction of new and innovative career exploration programs into the regular curriculum and instruction.

ADMINISTRATIVE INITIATIVES

RECOMMENDATION 6.9

The Department of Educational and Cultural Services should carry out a thorough review of the in-service needs of Maine teachers in order to develop resource networks and funding mechanisms to support local educational agencies (LEA's) in providing comprehensive in-service (staff development) programs for all teachers. In-service activities need to be tied to locally identified (and school specific) teacher action plans, and to the new certification standards. Flexibility and support for vocational educators to receive in-service credits for experiences in industry should be provided.

RECOMMENDATION 6.10

The State Board of Education should require that competency-based pre-service and in-service educational and training programs be designed to give educators the skills and knowledge to provide support services to the wide diversity of students:

a. Basic instructional skills;

b. Technical upgrading programs (such as the "Staff/ Industry Exchange" program, the "Teacher-In-Residence" program, and others);

c. Working with special needs students;

d. Development and implementation of competency-based curricula;

e. Development of innovative and exemplary programs;

f. Applications of new technology and research to the classroom;

g. Integration of basic and related skills instruction into vocational programs;

h. Methods of overcoming sex bias and stereotyping and promoting entry into nontraditional programs; and,

i. A strong career planning component emphasizing the integration of career information into existing curricula.

RECOMMENDATION 6.11

The Department of Educational and Cultural Services and the State Board of Education should implement a strategy to minimize the number of lost school days due to conflicts in school calendars.

MEMBERS

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